

## **Torn Curtain: The Secret History of the Cold War**

5 x 53'00 Radio Documentary series

Broadcast on *Hindsight*, ABC Radio National, May – June 2006

### **Research Background**

This extensively researched series asks how the wealth of declassified documents, archival material and personal testimony which has become available since the end of the Cold War changes our understanding of key themes and episodes in Cold War history. It brings the methodologies of investigative journalism to bear on historical evidence and historical argument.

### **Research Contribution**

The series draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including original interviews with contemporary actors such as former officials, diplomats, intelligence officers, political activists, journalists, archival sound material (some of it made publicly accessible for the first time) and interviews with academic historians, as well as dramatic reconstructions of declassified documents. It delivers new insights and an original perspective on Cold War history and the underlying geo-political, ideological and cultural forces which shaped it.

### **Research Significance**

The series is now cited as a primary and secondary source in academic works of Cold War history (eg Cortright, David: *Peace: a History of Movements and Ideas*, CUP, 2008, p 161). It has been rebroadcast 3 times on ABC Radio National since 2006. One episode, *The Week that Changed the World*, was a finalist in the NSW Premier's History Awards in 2006. In 2011, the entire series was rebroadcast in the US on the Talking History website hosted by Albany University (SUNY) and radio station WRPI-FM.

## **Torn Curtain: The Secret History of the Cold War (2006)**

Broadcast on *Hindsight*, ABC Radio National, May – June 2006

This is a 5-part series and website which investigates key themes and episodes in Cold War history. Through the use of declassified documents, archival research, original interviews with participants (former officials, diplomats, intelligence officers, political activists etc), interviews with academic historians, journalists, contemporary witnesses, and archival sound material, the series delivers new insights and an original perspective on Cold War history and the underlying geo-political, ideological and cultural forces which shaped it.

(5 x 53'57)

### **Episode 1: Living within the Truth—the Cold War as Struggle of Ideas (53'57)**

The Cold War was both a geo-political contest and an ideological struggle. The contest of ideas was fought out within societies as vigorously— and sometimes as viciously—as it was between east and west.

This episode focuses on the global protests of 1968 and their implications for the future course of the Cold War in both East and West. It draws connections between events in Prague, Paris, Berlin and Berkeley.

A story of revolution, rock 'n roll—and the power of the powerless.

Broadcast Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

### **Episode 2: Science, Spies and Australia's Bid for the Bomb (53'57)**

In July 1949 a brilliant young Australian physicist and member of the Communist party, Tom Kaiser, who had just completed his PhD research at Oxford, took part in a demonstration outside Australia House in London.

Within days, he was caught up in a web of Cold War intrigue stretching from Canberra to London and Washington.

At stake was Australia's bid to become a nuclear weapons state—and the activities of a Soviet spy ring at the highest levels of the Australian government.

Broadcast Sunday 21st May 2006.

### **Episode 3: The Vietnam War and Richard Nixon's Secret Nuclear Alert (53'57)**

In January 1969, Richard Nixon had just been elected on a promise of peace with honour—a promise to get American troops out of Vietnam and heal the deep divisions in American society.

But within six months of moving into the White House, Nixon would embark on a highly secret strategy of massively escalating the war—and bluffing the Soviet Union that he was prepared to use nuclear weapons.

This episode tells the story of Nixon's secret nuclear alert, and contains surprising revelations from the Soviet archives about how Soviet leaders saw the Vietnam war—and their involvement in it.

Broadcast Sunday 28th May 2006.

### **Episode 4: The Week that Changed the World—Nixon, Mao and the 'Opening to China' (53'57)**

This episode explores the background to Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China in 1971, which paved the way for President Richard Nixon's "opening to China".

The handshake between Nixon and Chairman Mao in May 1972 had repercussions which were felt around the world, and shifted the balance of world power decisively.

This program reconstructs Kissinger's secret visit, using declassified transcripts of his conversations with Zhou Enlai. It charts the geo-political shifts which predated that visit; and it explores the part Australia played in these events, and the ramifications of the slow thaw between east and west.

Broadcast Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

### **Episode 5: The Nuclear War We Nearly Had in 1983 (53'57)**

Today, the 1980s are remembered as the decade in which American strength and determination under the presidency of Ronald Reagan led to the final collapse of communism and the liberation of eastern Europe. Yet the world nearly paid a terrible price for Reagan's uncompromising stand against the 'evil empire' in the early 80s.

In late 1983, the world came closer to the brink of nuclear war than at any time since the Cuba crisis.

Deeply paranoid Soviet politicians and military leaders believed that the US was preparing to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union—and argued that the Soviets should prepare to strike first if necessary.

This program tells the story of the 'war scare' of 1983.

Broadcast Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

**Awards: Finalist, NSW Premier's History Awards, 2006**

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